

Falsified Soil Samples To Stalled Development: Hunters Point Shipyard Mired In Ongoing Controversy

September 18, 2018 | Julie Littman, Bisnow Bay Area

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San Francisco's largest redevelopment in over 100 years is becoming one of its most controversial developments.

Hunters Point, also known as San Francisco Shipyard, and the nearby Candlestick Point, the site of the former 49ers stadium, have been lauded as a huge future mixed-use community with 12,000 housing units and millions of square feet of office. Controversy surrounding falsified soil testing at Hunters Point is making it difficult for the development to move forward.



Hunters Point is a former naval base station that tested nuclear weapons and was listed as a Superfund site by the EPA in 1989. Cleanup had been going forward as planned until the U.S. Navy first noticed issues with soil samples not matching

data in 2012.

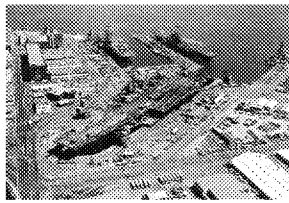
Since then Tetra Tech employees, who were hired to clean up the soil, have come forward admitting to falsifying soil sample data. Investigations have ramped up this year after reports revealed the extent of the issue, and the future of the development is now in question.

Check out the timeline below to get caught up on everything that has occurred so far this year.

January

An initial review of soil sample data revealed over 48% of the work done by government contractor Tetra Tech was falsified or suspect and was recommended for retesting. The report didn't apply to land on Parcel A where housing is already built as that land was previously used for base housing and was already deemed safe.

The U.S. Navy said it would retest all areas at the shipyard where the contractor did work, completing as early as summer. If contamination was found to be still present, the Navy would hire another contractor to clean the area, further delaying land transfers.

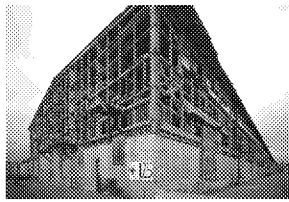


April

EPA documents released by a public-employee accountability organization revealed that the U.S. Navy has largely understated the contamination problem. The documents revealed that nearly 97% of the cleanup data was unreliable and needed to be retested on a 40-acre site called Parcel G and 90% of the data on the 40-acre site called Parcel B was unreliable. Reports revealed that workers falsified data by pulling samples from clean sites and passing them off as ones from dirty areas, by scanning samples too quickly to detect contamination and by falsifying results.

Tetra Tech offered to pay for a third-party investigation to prove that procedures were followed. Meanwhile, environmental advocates began calling for a retesting of all areas, including Parcel A, where over 300 homes have already been constructed.

Despite concerns of contamination, the San Francisco Planning Commission approved a revised Phase 2 master plan of the redevelopment to increase the amount of hotel, retail, education, workspaces and housing units at both the Shipyard and Candlestick Point.



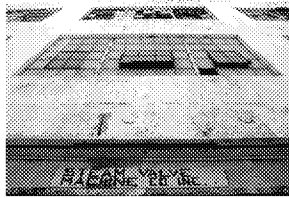
May

A lawyer representing Hunters Point/Bayview residents filed a class-action lawsuit seeking \$27B in damages from Tetra Tech.

Unsealed documents revealed that two former Tetra Tech supervisors pleaded guilty to falsifying documents and received federal prison sentences in 2017. These workers said they swapped contaminated dirt with clean dirt.

San Francisco supervisors held a hearing with Tetra Tech representatives and other interested parties and pressured the Navy to retest the entire site.

City officials toured the Parcel A site in late May and said the area is safe to live, but continued to push for further testing. Staff also received an update on the cleanup work and the Navy said it expected to have a plan ready by the end of June followed by a 60-day community review.



June

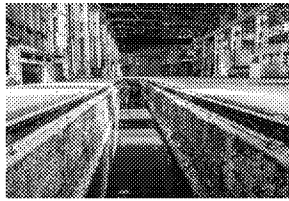
Analysis released by the EPA and two state agencies found that four portions of the shipyard previously deemed safe had radioactive measurements that were suspect. This report marked the first instance in which there was potential fraud on land already transferred to the city. The four small parcels are next to Parcel A and are used as utility corridors and are not under construction.

The Navy released its plan for retesting Hunters Point starting with Parcel G, which is expected to be turned into offices, parks and homes. The Navy didn't indicate whether the site was safe, but said retesting was needed to determine if the site was ready to be transferred to the city. Jacobs Engineering Group was selected to resurvey the site. The work is expected to begin in the fall and take about three to six months.

The Navy also agreed to retest Parcel A, and the California Department of Public Health said testing for radioactive contamination would start in July.

FivePoint co-Chief Operating Officer Kofi Bonner said the contamination issues at the Hunters Point site set the development back at least two to three years. Bonner told the San Francisco Chronicle that much of the project has been put on hold, including a \$30M art studio complex that began construction in April.

The 450 housing units on Parcel A would be completed, but no additional parcels would be developed until the soil was retested and the property was determined to be safe. The company has already shifted focus toward redevelopment of Candlestick Point.



July

California Department of Public Health workers began testing public areas near the existing housing for gamma radiation, but did not include testing the homes.

Attorneys representing two families living at the Shipyard filed a lawsuit against the developer and Tetra Tech and accused the developer of failing to properly disclose potential contamination of the property.

September

A small, highly radioactive radium deck marker was found on a slope near recently built condos at Parcel A. An area at Donahue Street and Galvez Avenue was flagged as having readings above natural background levels and a contractor was called to investigate, leading to the discovery of the device. The finding has sparked additional debate over the safety of Parcel A, which has been repeatedly deemed safe by public officials.

Government agencies have said the parcel poses no dangers since nothing more has showed up, but residents continue to express concerns over the safety of the site.

Related Topics: Tetra Tech, US Navy, Hunters Point, Kofi Bonner, Hunters Point Shipyard, FivePoint, San Francisco waterfront, FivePoint Holdings, San Francisco development